

**ESF Coordinator**

Stillwater County Disaster and Emergency  
Services (SC DES)

**Primary Agencies**

City of Columbus Government  
Stillwater County Government

**Support Agencies**

All local and county agencies/ departments that are  
impacted or have Public Affairs capabilities

Montana Disaster and Emergency Services (DES)  
Montana Department of Natural Resources and  
Conservation (DNRC)

**Introduction**

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**Purpose**

Emergency Support Function (ESF) #15 External Affairs provides a clear, concise and accurate manner on actions taken by local and state governments and actions to be taken by the public. Every effort will be made to ensure timely distribution of accurate information to the public and to counter rumor and inaccurate information with facts as they are known. Message priority will be based around incident and Emergency Operation Center objectives. Likewise, all appropriate local, state and federal entities requiring accurate information will be provided it through ESF #15 regarding the status of response and recovery activities associated with the scope and needs of their office, department, or agency mission.

**Scope**

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The Stillwater County Disaster and Emergency Services (SC DES), working in cooperation with all government jurisdictions involved in the disaster is responsible for ESF #15—External Affairs while response and recovery operations are ongoing. During prevention, preparedness and mitigation individual government agencies are responsible for their own external affairs and information dissemination. ESF #15 may be activated by SC DES at the request of a local (city or town) jurisdiction to help manage external affairs on a local incident even if all other areas under the incident command structure are small enough to be handled by the local jurisdiction.

ESF #15 provides Stillwater County and the local (city and town) jurisdictions within County boundaries with a single point to collect and disseminate information working with all jurisdictions involved from within Stillwater County. All departments of County and local jurisdictions involved will provide information to and assist with this function during a disaster or emergency.

Before, during and after a disaster or emergency, the public will be apprised of information through reports to the news media, internet, social media outlets or other means such as reverse-911, the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) and/or other means as they are available, appropriate and functional to disseminate information in a timely manner.

SC DES serves as the ESF Coordinator and will ensure that ESF #15’s critical function, to provide the public with essential information and documentation by written, verbal, photographic or other means is accomplished. Each individual jurisdiction involved in the response or recovery efforts is responsible to

ensure their jurisdiction is represented and is participating as necessary in all activities as they relate to ESF #15 during response and recovery efforts.

Jurisdictions that do not have a representative participating in ESF #15 efforts will not duplicate efforts individually as this has the potential to create confusion regarding information, unity of effort or the coordinated manner in which a disaster or emergency is coordinated when reaching a level of this complexity.

## **Policies**

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### **ESF #15 Policies**

Stillwater County Disaster and Emergency Service serves as the ESF Coordinator for ESF #15 throughout the response and recovery efforts of a disaster or emergency or as requested. ESF may coordinate and release incident information on behalf of the incident management team if requested.

Political jurisdictions or political subdivisions affected by the disaster serve as the Primary Agencies for ESF #15. This includes all departments, agencies and associated government organizations within political jurisdictions or subdivisions.

During prevention, preparedness and mitigation individual government agencies are generally responsible for their own external affairs and information dissemination. If needed and requested, a coordinated activation of ESF #15 may occur during these stages.

All departments of County and local jurisdictions involved will provide information to and assist with this function during a disaster or emergency.

Each individual jurisdiction involved in the response or recovery efforts is responsible to ensure their jurisdiction is represented and is participating as necessary in all activities as they relate to ESF #15 during response and recovery efforts.

Under this plan, individuals are recommended to have the following training to act as the “Lead PIO”:

#### **Core Training Recommended**

ICS-100: Introduction to Incident Command System (ICS)

ICS-200: ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents

G0289 or IS-029: Public Information Officer Awareness Training\*

G0290 or E/L 952 or S-203: Basic Public Information Officer\*

G0291: Joint Information System/ Joint Information Center Planning for Tribal, State and Local PIOs\*

E388: Advanced Public Information Officer\*

\*or applicable and comparable training and/or real-world experience

#### **Supplemental Training Recommended**

IS-42: Social Media in Emergency Management

IS-250.a: Emergency Support Function #15: External Affairs

IS-247.a or IS-248 or IS-251: IPAWS and Public Warning Systems

ICS-300: Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents

ICS-400: Advanced Incident Command System

IS-700: National Incident Management System (NIMS): An Introduction

IS-702.a: NIMS Public Information Systems

## IS-800: National Response Framework (NRF): An Introduction

Jurisdictions that do not have a representative participating in ESF #15 efforts will not duplicate efforts individually.

Support is tailored based on the type, extent, and duration of the incident, long-term recovery period, and on the availability of resources.

### Concept of Operations

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#### General

ESF #15 provides the coordination mechanisms to provide the public with essential information and documentation by written, verbal, photographic, digital or other means which is accomplished through a single source known as the Joint Information Center (JIC).

SC DES organizes ESF #15 under the EOC Manager and will have a single point of contact with the Lead PIO. This Lead PIO organizes staff, meetings, coordination, information exchange with incidents and other ESFs as needed with the representatives from all other agencies participating in the JIC.

ESF #15 is scalable to meet the specific needs of each incident, based on the type, extent, and duration of the incident.

Support agencies will provide assistance under the Incident Command System (ICS) in place to the ESF Coordinator and Primary Agencies in line with their agency mission and functions.

**Table 14-1. Functional Categories, Actions and Responsibilities**

	ESF Actions and Responsibilities
Lead PIO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide command and control to groups operating within the JIC as described below</li><li>• Access existing or develop an appropriate Joint Information System (JIS) with involved agencies</li><li>• Identify and solicit appropriate spokesperson(s) based on the type of incident</li></ul>
Agency PIO Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coordinate with Incident PIO and PIO liaisons from impacted agencies/ departments/ non-government agencies to ensure a common, consistent message throughout all public information releases</li></ul>
Writing Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop accurate and timely public information releases</li><li>• Coordinate with spokesperson(s), public inquiry group, social media group, media monitoring group, incident and agency PIOs to address questions that have come into each of those areas</li><li>• Attend operational briefing, planning meeting or acquire</li></ul>

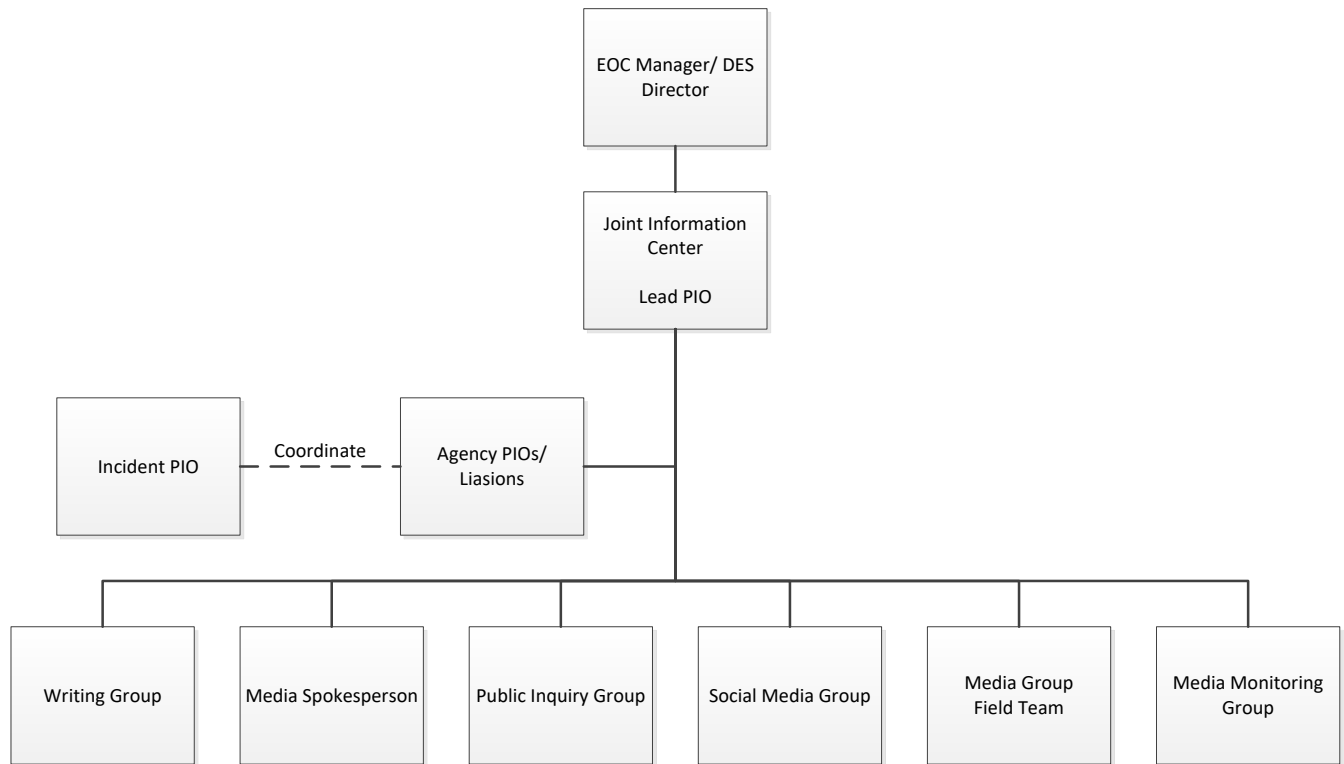
	information from other sources as available
Media Spokesperson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with traditional media outlets including television, radio, digital and print media as the spokesperson for the JIC.</li> <li>Advise additional individuals (technical experts, elected officials etc.) speaking at public meetings or with media outlets regarding the verified and accurate information available at that time</li> <li>Utilize information and messages crafted by the Writing Group</li> <li>Organize, attend and speak at public meetings as needed</li> </ul>
Public Inquiry Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Field inquiries from public sources and answer questions with information that has been cleared for release through the JIC and proper channels</li> <li>Gather information regarding the incident and pass to appropriate groups</li> <li>Pass inaccurate information and rumors to the Lead PIO so accurate information may be disseminated at subsequent media interactions and press releases</li> </ul>
Social Media Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor commonly used social media platforms for information relating to the incident</li> <li>Gather information regarding the incident from social media platforms as available and pass to appropriate groups</li> <li>Pass inaccurate information and rumors to the Lead PIO so accurate information may be disseminated at subsequent media interactions and press releases</li> <li>Engage in discussion and information dissemination on social media platforms on behalf of the EOC to answer questions and refute inaccurate information utilizing only information that has been cleared for release through the JIC and proper channels</li> </ul>
Media Group Field Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide needed material to the other groups in the JIC such as photographs, videos and other media materials</li> <li>Travel to the incident or other sites as is deemed safe, requested, coordinated and approved by incident command</li> </ul>
Media Monitoring Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor traditional media platforms including print, and broadcast outlets for information relating to the incident</li> <li>Engage print and broadcast media outlets on behalf of the EOC to answer questions and refute inaccurate information utilizing only information that has been cleared for release through the JIC and proper channels</li> </ul>

## Organization—Response Structure

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ESF #15 operates under the direction of SC DES. SC DES will identify a coordinator known as the “Lead PIO” based on the assistance needed for an incident requiring the activation of ESF #15. The Lead PIO position will be taken from the agencies involved based on the incident type and individual experience acting in the PIO function.

## Emergency Support Function #15- External Affairs



## **Signatures**

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We, the undersigned, understand our roles and responsibilities as outline in ESF #15.

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Carol Arkell  
Stillwater County Disaster and Emergency Services

The signatures on the promulgation documents at the beginning of the EOP will suffice as signatures from the local political jurisdictions.